

City of
Bellevue



Transportation Commission Study Session

DATE: December 12, 2019

TO: Chair Wu and Members of the Transportation Commission

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SUBJECT: Bellevue Vision Zero Action Plan: Safe Systems Strategies

DIRECTION REQUESTED

THE COMMISSION IS ASKED TO TAKE ACTION ON THE SAFE SYSTEMS STRATEGIES, PREPARE A TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO COUNCIL, AND REQUEST COUNCIL DIRECTION TO PREPARE RECOMMENDED POLICIES TO INCORPORATE INTO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

Action

Discussion/Direction

Information

PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Purpose of the Project**

Implement a Vision Zero Action Plan to advance the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Bellevue by 2030.

- **Council Direction**

On December 7, 2015, the City Council unanimously adopted Resolution 9035, endorsing Vision Zero and directed the Transportation Commission to determine if any updates, revisions or additional policies were warranted, and to report their findings.

On March 7, 2016, the City Council accepted the Transportation Commission's recommendation to incorporate several new Vision Zero policies and amendments to existing policies and directed that they be included in the suite of 2016 Comprehensive Plan amendments.

On December 12, 2016, the City Council adopted [Ordinance 6334](#), incorporating Vision Zero policies into the [Bellevue Comprehensive Plan](#) and directed staff to: (i) prepare and implement a Vision Zero Action Plan; (ii) update Vision Zero strategies periodically; and, (iii) provide Vision Zero status reports that aggregate and analyze data, document efforts, communicate progress to the City Council and to the community.

- **Transportation Commission Role**

Staff seeks input and recommendations from the Transportation Commission on the Vision Zero Action Plan. The Commission is asked to take action on the safe systems strategies, prepare a transmittal to Council, and request Council direction to prepare recommended policies to incorporate into the Comprehensive Plan. As expressed in Bellevue City Code Chapter 3.63 (see Attachment 1), the powers and duties of the Transportation Commission with regards to the Vision Zero Action Plan falls under:

- Section 3.63.070(F) – Short-term planning studies and implementation programs, such as transportation demand management.
- Section 3.63.070(I) - Long-range transportation planning, including participation with the planning commission in preparing, reviewing and recommending comprehensive plan updates and subarea transportation plans; provided, that the planning commission shall review and make final recommendations to the city council on all matters which will be adopted by the city council as part of the comprehensive plan.

- **Context of the Project**

The Vision Zero Action Plan is a citywide, transportation safety initiative that leverages safe systems strategies and actions to advance the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Bellevue by 2030.

- **Options Being Considered**

N/A

- **Staff Recommendation and Rationale**

The Safe Systems approach emerged out of countries at the forefront of Vision Zero state of practice. In [Implementing Safe Systems in the United States: Guiding Principles and Lessons from International Practice](#) researchers at the Collaborative Sciences Center for Road Safety linked the following improved safety outcomes to the Safe Systems approach:

- Sweden – Fatalities declined by 50% between 2000 and 2014, and pedestrian fatalities, specifically, declined by 50% between 2009 and 2014.
- The Netherlands – Between 1997 and 2007 road traffic fatalities were reduced by 30%.
- Australia – Outcomes between 2001-2010 varied across states and territories, with the greatest 10-year reduction in road fatalities (per 100,000) occurring in Tasmania (47.5%) while the Northern Territory experienced the least overall reduction (16.1%).
- New Zealand – Between 2009 and 2012, road deaths declined 20%, and 284 fatalities in 2011 marked the lowest road toll since 1952. Deaths of young drivers (ages 15-24) decreased 38%.

In their research on 53 countries the WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities and the Global Road Safety Facility of the World Bank “found that those that have taken a Safe System based approach have achieved both the lowest rates of fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants and the greatest reduction in fatality levels over the past 20 years” (see [Sustainable and Safe: A Vision and Guidance for Zero Road Deaths](#)). And, in [Towards Zero: Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach](#), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) International Transport Forum asserts: “A Safe System approach is of the only way to achieve the vision of zero road fatalities and serious injuries and requires that the road system be designed to expect and accommodate human error.”

Supporting research and development through knowledge transfer, the Institute of Transportation Engineers – in partnership with both the national Road to Zero Coalition and the Road to Zero Safe Systems Working Group – is encouraging Vision Zero communities in the United States to adopt the Safe Systems approach because it is demonstrated to result in improved safety outcomes (see [ITE Technical Resources](#)). This guidance is encouraging agencies like the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to endorse this approach in its Draft 2019 Target Zero Plan: “It is time for Washington to adopt the Safe Systems principles statewide in its policies, programs, projects, activities, and investments. When we do so, we will save lives provide better stewardship of public resources, and improve the function of the transportation system for everyone using it. When we do so, everyone can arrive safely at their destination.”

The Safe Systems approach examines the factors that contribute to serious injury and fatality crashes. It focuses on addressing these factors directly in ways that improve outcomes for all road users. The Safe Systems approach recognizes that the human body has a limited tolerance for the forces during a crash, that humans make mistakes, and that all stakeholders – roadway users, designers and managers of infrastructure, vehicle manufacturers, policy makers, and others – have a responsibility to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

The Safe Systems approach broadens the discussion of Vision Zero to include everyone – acknowledging that new vehicle technologies, improved street infrastructure, lower speeds, and enhanced public awareness on traffic safety can all contribute to reducing the impact of crashes. The responsibility for the Safe Systems approach is shared: leaders are prepared to make challenging decisions when traffic safety is at stake, staff leverages new technologies and closely monitors data to assess results, partnerships with the public and private sectors are formed to achieve intended outcomes, and together we are developing a safety culture which acknowledges that zero is the only acceptable number of deaths and serious injuries on our streets.

The Safe Systems approach and strategies arise from carefully evaluating [Bellevue crash data](#) – including trends, contributing factors, and streets with a high concentration of traffic collisions that result in severe injuries and deaths (see [memo](#)). These quantitative insights were blended with a consideration of existing road safety efforts underway in Bellevue and Vision Zero best practices – including policies, strategies, and actions that are successful elsewhere and applicable to Bellevue (see [memo](#)). Finally, staff solicited input from residents and business stakeholders, first responders, public health professionals, safety advocates, technologists, and state and federal agencies. Notably, experts from the Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Washington Traffic Safety Commission, Washington

State Department of Transportation, Washington State Patrol, Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium, Institute of Transportation Engineers, and others validated the Safe Systems approach and strategies at the Bellevue Vision Zero Summit on February 13, 2019 at Overlake Medical Center (see [event program](#)).

At its December 12 meeting, staff requests Transportation Commission review and affirm the Safe Systems strategies that holistically consider Safe Speeds, Safe People, Safe Vehicles, and Safe Streets as coordinated solutions towards Vision Zero (see Attachment 2). As noted in the background section, this action affirms previous Commission actions.

Attachment 3 reflects proposed lead-in messaging for the four supportive elements (i.e., Data, Leadership, Partnerships, and Culture) of the Safe Systems Approach. This lead-in messaging was not available at the time staff briefed the Transportation Commission on March 28, 2019; as such, staff requests Transportation Commission review and approve this narrative for inclusion into the Safe Systems approach document (Attachment 2).

Finally, staff requests Transportation Commission review and approve the draft transmittal letter to Council (see Attachment 4). Staff requests Commission representation at a future City Council study session meeting to share insights and the transmittal letter. When the study session meeting is scheduled staff will bring forward a draft resolution endorsing the Safe Systems approach and strategies for City Council consideration and action. This City Council action will provide guidance to staff as it finalizes the Vision Zero Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

At its core, the Safe Systems approach rests on four pillars: Safe Speeds, Safe People, Safe Vehicles, and Safe Streets. When the approach was shared with the Transportation Commission at its January 10, 2019 meeting (see [Agenda Memo](#)) Commissioner Marciante stressed the need to make sure the Safe Systems approach includes the supportive elements of data, leadership, partnerships, and culture. Commissioner Bishop as the maker of the original motion, and Commissioner Chirls as the seconder of the motion, said they would accept the amendment. The motion – as amended – carried unanimously.

Following the confirmation of the Safe Systems approach, staff reviewed road safety strategies the City presently employs in engineering, education, encouragement, evaluation, equity, and enforcement. Additionally, the consultant team supporting the project conducted a literature review of technologies and innovative tools that are successful elsewhere and transferable to Bellevue. This information was synthesized into 36 proposed strategies that are nested within the Safe Systems approach and were shared with the Transportation Commission at its March 28, 2019 meeting (see [Agenda Memo](#)). A motion to confirm these Safe Systems strategies was made by Commissioner Marciante. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chirls and the motion carried unanimously.

Tonight's discussion and actions – both affirming the Transportation Commission's previous endorsement of the Safe Systems strategies and approving the transmittal letter to the City Council – represent important milestones towards finalizing the actions nested within the Vision Zero Action Plan. Staff requests Commission representation at a future City Council study session meeting to share insights and the transmittal letter. Staff will bring forward a draft resolution endorsing the Safe Systems strategies for City Council consideration and action. City

Council approval of this resolution would form the basis for finalizing the actions nested within the Safe Systems strategies.

INFORMATION

Tonight’s action – affirming the Safe Systems strategies – builds upon the City Council’s “why” statement (i.e., the Vision Zero goal) by articulating “what” steps (i.e., Safe Systems strategies) the Transportation Commission and staff should pursue to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Bellevue by 2030. The development of strategies and their resultant shorter-term actions is a continuing activity. Indeed, many of the actions that will be identified in the Bellevue Vision Zero Action Plan will necessitate additional rounds of Transportation Commission and City Council consultation and approval processes.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Transportation Commission:

- reviews and affirms the Safe Systems strategies that holistically consider Safe Speeds, Safe People, Safe Vehicles, and Safe Streets as coordinated solutions towards Vision Zero,
- approves the transmittal letter to the City Council; and
- requests City Council direction to prepare recommended policies that integrate the Safe Systems approach and strategies into the Comprehensive Plan (*note: staff is not seeking specific language changes to the Comprehensive Plan at this time; pending City Council direction, this will be an agenda item for the Transportation Commission’s 2020 work program*).

NEXT STEPS

The City Council’s adoption of a resolution endorsing the Safe Systems strategies would position staff to finalize the Action Plan which reflects “how” (i.e., the coordinated set of actions to achieve a specific result in a specified period) Bellevue will move towards Vision Zero.

Pending City Council direction, staff will work with the Transportation Commission – as part of its 2020 work program – to develop policies and narrative that integrate the Safe Systems approach into Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan. The following is additional context for Transportation Commission’s potential future engagement on the Comprehensive Plan and next steps:

1. Describe the Comprehensive Plan.

Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan is the city’s foundational policy document that guides growth and development. The Comprehensive Plan sets out the community’s vision for the future, lays out a groundwork of planning policies to guide city actions, and provides a framework so that city departments and community organizations work together toward common goals.

2. Describe how the Comprehensive Plan guides the City’s development/growth.

One of the fundamental roles of the Comprehensive Plan is to anticipate, guide, and plan for growth in a way that helps the city achieve its vision. The plan is a tool to look ahead to the likely growth and ensure that the city’s plans for land uses, infrastructure, and services are aligned. It ensures an appropriate mix of land uses are available to support the city’s

economic goals, provide services to residents and businesses, and provide an array of choices for where to live.

3. *Overview of transportation policies and safety related transportation policies.*

The Transportation Element provides both policy direction to guide programs, priorities, design, and investments that address local and regional mobility by providing people with an assortment of mobility options that help people get where they need to go. This plan integrates land use planning with transportation planning and investments. It emphasizes that the transportation system supports the city's land use vision and livability by providing options for people to get to the city as well as travel within the city. Mode of travel, capacity and design for each mode, and priorities for mobility along right-of-way corridors reflect the intensity and mix of land uses and the expectations for safety and livability. Mobility options consider and accommodate the needs of underserved populations, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, the young, and low-income households.

Policies related to Vision Zero are integrated throughout the Transportation Element to support implementing context-appropriate traffic safety measures for all travel modes and to emphasize protecting the most vulnerable users. In a comprehensive, coordinated manner, Bellevue will maintain, enhance and monitor progress in a citywide effort to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030.

4. *Describe how the proposed Safety system framework builds upon existing safety related policies and provides clear direction for the City's effort in reducing Killed or Serious Injury (KSI) collisions.*

On December 12, 2016, the City Council adopted Ordinance 6334, incorporating Vision Zero policies into the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan and directed staff to: (i) prepare and implement a Vision Zero Action Plan; (ii) update Vision Zero strategies periodically; and, (iii) provide Vision Zero status reports that aggregate and analyze data, document efforts, communicate progress to the City Council and to the community. Among the policies adopted into the Comprehensive Plan is TR-61.2 directing staff to: "Develop a programmatic approach to Vision Zero that integrates components of Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, Equity, and Evaluation."

The Safe Systems approach clarifies the City of Bellevue's programmatic approach to Vision Zero. Nested within the approach are 36 strategies that build upon the City Council's "why" statement (i.e., the Vision Zero goal) by articulating "what" programmatic steps staff should pursue to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Bellevue by 2030. Pending City Council adoption of the Safe Systems approach and strategies, staff will finalize the Vision Zero Action Plan and commence work on "One City" collaborations between city departments to advance coordinated actions in engineering, education, encouragement, evaluation, equity, and enforcement.

ATTACHMENTS

1. BCC 3.63.070 Powers and Duties
2. Bellevue's Safe Systems Strategies
3. Proposed Lead-In Messaging for Supportive Elements of the Safe Systems Approach
4. Draft Transmittal Letter